

4. Your long-term goal. A statement of your long-term goal is used to begin the second paragraph, the purpose of which is to convince the reviewers that you (and your colleagues) are highly qualified to address the problem or issue that you identified in the opening paragraph. This statement defines the continuum of professional activities you are following (as a career goal) and the general field or area in which you either are already or are planning to become an acknowledged expert. The time required to attain your long-term goal should span at least several grant proposals; it could even include your entire professional career goal. New (or newer) applicants should concentrate on one long-term goal, whereas established grant writers may, under some circumstances, have more than one without appearing to dilute their efforts. There should be clear linkage between this long-term goal and the key problem or need that you have delineated at the end of the first paragraph (i.e., the problem identified must be clearly encompassed within the continuum of professional activities that your long-term goal defines). There must also be a very close linkage between the statement of your long-term goal and the overall mission of the funding agency to which you will be requesting support. Once again, this underscores the importance of fully understanding what the mission of the funding agency is, an issue that we discussed in detail in CHAPTER 1. Your mission and the mission of the funding agency must be sufficiently similar that their investment in you will be a solid, long-term good investment. Be careful not to overstate your long-term goal.

5. Objective of this proposal. The statement of long-term goal should be followed directly by a specific statement of exactly what the objective for this proposal is. This is where you explain to the reviewers exactly what you expect to accomplish with *this* proposal (and *not*, as was pointed out above under the section on the opening sentence, to introduce the opening paragraph). Put quite simply, if you are paying careful attention to the issue of linkage that we have tried to stress to this point, the objective will normally be to fill the gap in the knowledge base, solve the problem, or address the need that you have carefully delineated at the end of the first paragraph. That is your objective, and you must make certain that a tight linkage exists between the two. There must also be linkage between the objective and your long-term goal. It must be clear that the objective is one step along the continuum of professional activities that are projected by your long-term (professional career) goal.

6. Hypothesis-driven or statement-of-need – driven proposals. Without exception, all grant proposals must be either hypothesis driven or statement-of-need driven. In either case, it is absolutely critical that a strong linkage exists between the central hypothesis or statement-of-need and the objective of the proposal. The actual decision of whether to write a proposal that is hypothesis driven or statement-of-need driven depends upon the nature of the problem that has been identified in the first paragraph and the activities that will be taken to address that problem. In most cases, to form a central hypothesis, a significant body of information must exist regarding the problem or issue, and a central hypothesis is used as a guide or working model that predicts an explanation as to a potential solution to that problem or issue.

The identification and formulation of a central hypothesis is the primary way in which grant proposals that deal with cases of scientific inquiry and laboratory bench research are approached. Usually in such cases, there is a well-established body of information that readily lends itself to the formation of a central hypothesis. In other cases, however, there may not be sufficient information available that would allow formulation of a hypothesis, or the formulation of that hypothesis would have to be contrived. Under those circumstances, the statement-of-need developed at the end of the opening paragraph alone would be a more appropriate approach. There are a number of circumstances in which the decision as to which approach to take is relatively obvious (i.e., there would clearly be no central hypothesis related to a request for funds to spend a sabbatical in Japan, remodel a theater, or purchase a major piece of scientific equipment.) There are, however, a few situations in which either approach might be justified, and under those circumstances a final decision can often be difficult.